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PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re the application of: Toshikazu HIROTA and Takao OHNISHI

Ser. No.: 09/868,832

Group Art Unit: 1634

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For: BIOCHIP

RULE 132 DECLARATION

I, Toshikazu Hirota, hereby declare and state that:

1. I am one of the inventors named in the above-identified patent application.
2. I received a BS Degree in Chemistry from Kyoto University in 1985 and a Masters Degree in Chemistry from Kyoto University in 1987. I have been employed by NGK Insulators, Ltd., the assignee of the present application, since April of 1987. During my employment at NGK Insulators, Ltd., I have been involved in research and development of electronic ceramics and, since 1992, particularly in the area of piezoelectric/electrostrictive devices.
3. I am familiar with the prosecution history of the above-identified application, and have reviewed the Office Action mailed July 28, 2003. It is my understanding that the PTO Examiner believes that biochips formed using an ink-jet apparatus, as claimed, are not structurally distinct from biochips formed by pin-head arraying devices. The present invention, however, is based, at least in part, on the discovery that the ink-jet process provides a structurally distinct biochip over biochips formed using conventional pin-head methods.

4. The ink-jet process, as compared to conventional pin-head methods, provides a structurally distinct biochip, because of the non-contact nature of the ink-jet process. In accordance with the invention, a first ink-jet sample spot that has a desired spot size and/or a desired capture material concentration is supplied onto a base plate and allowed to dry. A second ink-jet sample spot, which, for example, can have the same or a different spot size in relation to the first ink-jet sample spot and/or the same or a different capture material concentration, is then supplied on top of the dried first ink-jet sample spot. Due to the non-contact nature of the ink-jet process, the integrity of the dried first ink-jet sample spot is not affected by the delivery of the second ink-jet supplied sample spot. This is not the case with pin-head methods, in that the pin must contact the base plate during every application of material. This contact adversely affects the integrity of any spots already present on the base plate and thus adversely affects the uniformity of spot concentration across the test slide.

5. The following experiments were conducted by me or under my supervision to prove that use of an ink-jet process, as claimed, precisely delivers capture solution spots having a more accurate and reproducible capture material concentration in comparison to capture solution spots that are supplied onto a base plate using conventional pin-head methods.

6. The Table attached hereto shows the results of a direct comparison between the variations of fluorescent signal intensities emitted from ink-jet delivered capture solution spots having a relative capture material concentration (i.e., target concentration of capture solution 1, 2 or 3) and capture solution spots having the same relative capture material concentrations delivered by a pin-head method. A total of 60 spots were formed on a base plate. Each spot within the first group of 30 spots was formed using the ink-jet method, while each spot in the second group of 30 spots was formed using the pin-head method. After the first drops were allowed to dry, a second sample drop was supplied using the ink-jet method to 20 of the 30 spots in the first group,

and a second sample drop was supplied using the pin-head method to 20 of the 30 spots in the second group. After the second drops were allowed to dry, a third sample drop was supplied using the ink-jet method to 10 of the two-drop spots in the first group, and a third drop was supplied using the pin-head method to 10 of the two-drop spots in the second group. The finished test slide, therefore, had two groups of 30 spots, and within each group there were 10 one-drop spots, 10 two-drop spots, and 10 three-drop spots.

7. A solution including a target material capable of reacting with the corresponding capture materials in the capture solution spots formed on the base plate was then supplied onto each spot. The capture solutions used to form the spots contained relative concentrations of capture materials (i.e., target concentration of capture material 1, 2 or 3) that were adapted to specifically react with the target materials in the target material solution which was, for example, a positive control. The reaction between the capture solution spots and the target material solution caused a fluorescent signal to be emitted from each reacted capture solution spot. The fluorescent signal intensity value from each spot was obtained by subtracting background fluorescence, such as, for example, fluorescence emitted from the base plate itself, from the total fluorescence emanating from the reacted capture solution spots and the base plate. The capture solution fluorescent signal intensities were detected and measured using a conventional scanning apparatus.

8. The Table shows that the fluorescent signal intensities emitted from each of the individual spots within each capture spot group of pin-head delivered capture solution spots vary significantly from one another in comparison to the much smaller variation between the signal intensities emitted from the individual spots within each capture spot group of ink-jet supplied capture solution spots. For example, while the standard deviation of signal intensities between ink-jet delivered spots in the relative target concentration capture spot groups 1-3 was 310, 311 and 435, respectively, the standard deviation of signal intensities between pin-head delivered spots in the same

relative target concentration capture spot groups 1-3 was 656, 889 and 979, respectively. The lower standard deviation between the ink-jet delivered capture solution spots, as compared to the higher standard deviation between the pin-head delivered capture solution spots, proves that the claimed ink-jet process consistently delivers capture solution spots having a more exact, desired amount of capture material per sample spot. This is due to the non-contact nature of the ink-jet method.

9. The relatively higher standard deviation between the pin-head delivered sample spots is due to the contact, disruptive nature of the pin-head method. These results show that the degree of accuracy and precision in capture material per spot attributable to the claimed ink-jet process is not attainable using prior art pin-head arraying devices.

10. The comparative table of signals also shows that a significant variation exists between the standard deviation of fluorescent signal intensities emitted from each group of capture solution spots delivered using a pin-head device when compared to the signal intensities of those same groups of capture solution spots supplied onto the base plate via the ink-jet process. For example, while the standard deviation values for the signal intensities between the ink-jet delivered spots in relative target concentration capture spot groups 1 and 2 are practically identical (i.e., the standard deviations are 310 and 311, respectively), a much wider gap exists between the standard deviation values for the signal intensities between the pin-head delivered spots in relative target concentration capture spot groups 1 and 2 (i.e., the standard deviations are 656 and 889, respectively).

11. The practically identical standard deviation values for the signal intensities emitted from the ink-jet delivered capture solution spots in relative target concentration capture spot groups 1 and 2 is attributable to the non-contact nature of the ink-jet process. That is, the dried first ink-jet sample spot (having a target concentration of 1) is not affected by the delivery of the second ink-jet supplied sample spot (to provide an overall target concentration of 2). The standard deviation values for the signal intensities

between the pin-head delivered spots in relative target concentration capture spot groups 1 and 2 varies widely due to the contact nature of the pin-head method. These results show that the more exact, desired amount of capture material per sample spot attributable to the claimed ink-jet process is not attainable using prior art pin-head arraying devices.

12. The graph attached hereto provides additional quantitative proof that the non-contact nature of the claimed ink-jet process makes it possible to reproducibly deliver a more exact, desired amount of capture material per sample spot as compared to prior art pin-contact methods. The graph shows the existence of a linear relationship between the emitted signal intensities (which correspond to the relative target concentrations of each of the sample spots) of each of the ink-jet capture spot groups 1-3. That is, there is a clear linear relationship between the 3 groups. While the signal intensity values for ink-jet capture spot groups 1-3 are tightly packed around their respective average signal intensity values, it is difficult to ascertain whether the emitted signal intensity values for each of the pin-head capture spot groups 1-3 even belong to the same capture spot group. For example, it is clear that the signal intensities for the pin-head capture spot groups 1-3 are widely scattered and there are several instances in which the signal intensity values for one capture spot group overlap with the signal intensity values of another capture spot group. Accordingly, the graph results provide further proof that the more exact, desired and reproducible amount of capture material per sample spot attributable to the claimed ink-jet process is not attainable using prior art pin-contact arraying devices.

13. The results of this experimentation clearly show that the claimed ink-jet process provides a structurally distinct biochip in comparison to a biochip that is fabricated using conventional pin-head methods.

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

December 18, 2003
Date

Toshikazu Hirota
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Enclosures:

Comparative Table of Signals

Comparative Graph of Signal Intensities